THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Liberalisation of telecommunications sector is as per the New Telecom Policy of the Government. It is also found that continuation of VSNL's monopoly in international telephony has been posing a serious constraint on the telecom infrastructure in the country to facilitate IT based services. Advancing the termination of this monopoly is considered to be in the public interest. Therefore, Government decided to terminate it on 31.3.2002, advancing it by two years. Thus, international telephony will also be opened for other players in the field. TRAI has already given their recommendations for opening up the ILD sector and government has accepted the recommendation. All the eligible applicants can apply for licence to enter this sector, when the guidelines are notified. There is no evidence to prove the allegations in the news item. Therefore, Government has not approached CBI to initiate an inquiry in the matter.

Consumer Protection Act, 1986

1849. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently carried out major amendments to the Consumer Protection Act, 1986;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the impact of these amendments on the growth and strengthening of consumer movement in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) No, Sir. However, the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2001 to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 mainly aimed at facilitating quicker disposal of consumer complaints, enhancing the capability of redressal agencies, strengthening them with more powers, streamlining the

procedures and widening the scope of the Act to make it more functional and effective, has been introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 26th April, 2001.

(b) Some of the important amendments contained in the Bill are as follows:

(i) Creation of benches of the National Commission and State Commissions and holding of circuit benches;

(ii) Prescribing time-frame for admission of complaint, issue of notices and disposal of complaint;

(iii) Exclusion of services availed for commercial purposes;

(iv) Recovery of compensation amount ordered by the redressal agency through certificate case as arrears of land revenue;

(v) Provision for issue of interim orders by the redressal agencies;

(vi) Establishment of consumer protection council at district level.

(c) Enactment of the Amendment Bill is expected to facilitate the working of the consumer disputes redressal agencies in the country and help in achieving speedy settlement of consumer disputes and also strengthening of the consumer movement at grass roots level.

Imported edible oils

1850. SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the quantum of imported edible oils allocated to the States/ UTs during 2000-2001;

(b) whether any State has complained about inadequate supply to meet the demand;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps being taken to fulfil the demand?